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FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1608
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2782
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1143
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3173
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2559
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 001266

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/18/2018

TAGS: PGOV PREL MARR MOPS KG

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ ADMINISTRATION REFUTES MEDIA REPORTS OF
BASE CLOSURE

REF: A. BISHKEK 1100
1B. BISHKEK 1059
1C. BISHKEK 1053

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Classified By: Charge Lee Litzenberger, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In a meeting with Charge December 19, Kyrgyz Presidential Foreign Policy Advisor Ryskulov refuted as "disinformation" an Agence France-Presse story that the Kyrgyz government was preparing to demand withdrawal of the Manas Air Base. Ryskulov said that the United States and Kyrgyzstan have a "valid international agreement" covering the base, and there "no question of opening it up." End summary.

Media Tales about Manas Air Base

¶2. (SBU) In a December 15 interview with Russian media outlet "Svobodnaya Pressa" (Free Press), Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev discussed Manas Air Base. Bakiyev noted the Base's history, his role in approving the establishment of the Base in 2001, and changed circumstances in Afghanistan. Bakiyev is quoted as saying, "I think the time has come when (the Afghans) can bring order themselves. At least there can be no talk of expanding the U.S. base in Kyrgyzstan. Yes, they requested an additional site, but I replied that this issue is closed. And due to the fact that in Afghanistan military operations are no longer conducted, it is possible to talk about the termination of the existing base at Manas." He added that the tactics to be used against drug trafficking did not require military planes.

¶3. (SBU) In a December 17 article, Kyrgyzstan's official Kabar news agency posted a summary of the interview under the headline, "Head of State: No Talk about Expansion of U.S. Air Base in Kyrgyzstan."

¶4. (SBU) Agence France-Presse (AFP) then put out an article, citing an anonymous source in the Kyrgyz administration and

using quotes from the Kabar article, that documents were being prepared by the Kyrgyz government to close the base.

Kyrgyz Government Seeks to Clarify the News

¶15. (C) Kyrgyz MFA Western countries Department Chief Kanat Tursunkulov assured A/DCM early on December 18 that the AFP article contained "an incorrect interpretation" of Bakiyev's comments, added that there was "nothing to worry about," and confirmed a late afternoon meeting for the Charge with Bakiyev's foreign policy advisor, Islan Ryskulov, where "everything would be explained."

¶16. (C) In the meeting with the Charge, Ryskulov dismissed the press reports about closing the base as "disinformation." He said that the journalists had misinterpreted Bakiyev's words.

Ryskulov said that Bakiyev was concerned about the increase in narcotics trafficking from Afghanistan, as Bakiyev had said in his October meeting with Assistant Secretary Boucher (Ref C). Regarding Base operations, Ryskulov said that the Base operated under valid international agreements, and it was there to support UN-sanctioned activities in Afghanistan.

Ryskulov said there was "no question" of opening up the agreement.

¶17. (C) Charge thanked Ryskulov for the clarification and took the opportunity to discuss the U.S. proposal to fund construction of a \$37 million project at the airport for a parking ramp and a special cargo handling area. Ryskulov said that Manas International Airport, which is working the proposal through its channels, should accelerate the process of gaining political approval for the project. He said it

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was extremely important that the airport's proposal include a well written explanation of the economic and infrastructure benefits of the project for the airport and for Kyrgyzstan. He added that it was very important that construction for the ramp take place on land already leased from the airport by the Base. He agreed to consider the proposal and provide additional advice on how to obtain Kyrgyz government approval for the project.

Comment

¶18. (C) Local media have reported rumored U.S. efforts to secure additional bases in the region, to include at Almaty, Kazakhstan's main airport, in Uzbekistan, and possibly elsewhere in the Kyrgyz Republic. Bakiyev's interview, if accurately reported, appears to demonstrate misconceptions about conditions in Afghanistan and activities at Manas Air Base. Fortunately, Ryskulov confirmed that there is no change in Kyrgyz policy toward the base, which continues to operate around the clock in support of U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan.

LITZENBERGER